



**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY-19
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in CT.

Connecticut is a national leader in the work of ending homelessness, and this is saving the state money while saving lives. We need to preserve the state's important resource investments to maintain these cost savings and to maintain the safety of our formerly homeless neighbors.

We appreciate the long commitment that Governor Malloy and our legislative leaders have demonstrated to ending homelessness in the state. We also recognize that this is a time for challenging choices about the state budget.

The current budget proposal preserves funding for critical housing and homelessness services and supports. These include the DOH Housing/Homeless Services line item, \$73.7 million in FY 18 and \$78.3 million in FY 19, for frontline housing/homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters, and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), which are essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly to permanent housing.

The Rental Assistance Program funds the rental subsidies which make a number of supportive housing projects possible in Connecticut. Supportive housing, which pairs intensive hands-on support services with deeply affordable housing, is nationally recognized as the most effective housing model to assist people experiencing chronic homelessness, and is also proven to cut public system costs by up to 70%.

As an example of the impact of the Rental Assistance Program, RAP funding provides the critical subsidies for two projects that have become national models in using data to identify some of the most vulnerable, high-need people experiencing homelessness in the state. The Connecticut Collaborative on Re-Entry and Connecticut Integrated Health and Housing Neighborhoods (CIHHN) programs identify frequent users of jails and crisis medical services, enabling them to establish housing stability and develop positive connections to thrive in the community. Participants in the CIHHN program had an average of more than \$40,000 in Medicaid costs in the year prior to their program enrollment.

One CIHHN client in New Haven was sleeping outside and had \$147,000 in Medicaid costs prior to housing, spending dozens of days in the hospital for medical problems related to acute alcoholism. He expressed feelings of hopelessness about his future and little motivation to engage in preventive



healthcare. After moving into his own apartment, he began cooking for himself, decorating his home with posters and houseplants, and with help from program support staff he established a relationship with a primary care provider. He didn't stop drinking, but his health problems improved so dramatically that he had no hospitalizations at all in the next year.

With the progress achieved in 2016 in matching every chronically homeless person in the state with a housing resource, the funds included in the Department of Housing Housing/Homeless Services line item are being used right now to serve the people systematically identified by providers across the state as the most vulnerable and highest in need. Cuts to these resources could have immediate negative impact on our neighbors who have been identified as needing help the most. Further, we know that helping these people saves money, and that funding cuts would result in new costs to our communities.

I appreciate your consideration of my testimony, and I thank you for your support for efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Betsy Branch

Associate Director

Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)